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ABSTRACT

The kind of history that is taught in the non-traditional contexts which utilize Distance Learning systems, especially at the United Kingdom's Open University (OU) and Australia's Deakin University, emphasizes the relationship of history to the other academic disciplines rather than the traditional approach of enumerating the history of famous people, events, and places. The respective curricula and model degree programs indicate that at Deakin in level 1 courses there is considerable emphasis on the use of sources, textual and documentary analysis, methodology, and historiography. In both universities the commitment to inter-disciplinary approaches to history teaching is maintained at later levels. It is also apparent that opportunities for specialization and for personal research are already well-developed at both the OU and Deakin. Common to both programs is the carefully graded use of sources and applied methodology at different levels--providing the student with "hands on" experience in the use of historical sources and data in personal research appropriate to his/her stage of development and study. Perhaps most vital to the success of distance teaching in historical studies both at the OU and at Deakin is the inter-active nature of the teaching and the various course components. Central to this is the "tutorial in print" pioneered by the OU--which involves the teacher in a direct one-to-one relationship with the student. (BZ)

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HISTORY AT A DISTANCE: A COMPARATIVE SURVEY

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
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A recent paper on the teaching of history at a distance discussed some of the general problems confronted by the discipline and the solutions adopted in various contexts - most notably in the UK, Canada and Australia. This present paper addresses itself to similar sets of problems through a comparative survey of The Open University and Deakin University experiences - where there are some remarkable parallels as well as inevitable contrasts, given the pace and nature of development. While the separate experience of the discipline in each of the institutions is readily articulated the comparative dimension is more elusive - but thanks to cooperation in visits and exchanges between historians is both timely and appropriate.

While some regard Deakin as the OU's closest analogue in Australia - and it cannot be denied that the former historically derived much from the latter - a great deal more attention is now being directed toward Australian approaches and at what can be learned from this experience. From the UK viewpoint these are regarded as highly innovative and flexible within a lower resource strategy of the kind being adopted presently by the OU. For history this is seen not only in Deakin but at the University of New England, Murdoch and Griffith Universities - amongst others - though Deakin leads the field. Certainly both the OU and Deakin have successfully overcome at least some of the problems of teaching history at a distance and developed programmes presenting innovative history courses not only within an inter-disciplinary context, but also offering sound specialisms.

This takes us to the most obvious starting point of identifying common features such as (i) the inter-disciplinary and inter-faculty context in which history is taught (ii) the broad-based curricula (iii) the opportunities for specialisation and progress to advanced or honours level, including a substantial research element (iv) the general commitment to teaching historiography, methodology and use of sources (v) the objective of teaching 'problem-based' history - rather than traditional 'content-based' history (vi) enthusiasm for newer approaches to social and economic history - as well as more traditional political history - and a distinct bias toward the modern period.

Before elaborating on some of these points let me say a personal word about the broader considerations and problems of teaching history - particularly of relevance to adult students - through Distance Learning systems. Something is often overlooked by some adult educators teaching the more familiar subjects like history or literature - are the problems of received or perceived knowledge - much of it redundant through bad texts, bad teaching and what adds up simply to outdated knowledge and approaches. The popular view of history as a subject is certainly formulated in the school classroom - in school history - and for long the traditional approach being addressed was the old-fashioned political history of famous people, events, and places of, for example, Britain's imperial past. While some mature students and even

more recent school-leavers may have been tainted by much of the mythology that surrounded such historical teaching, most also have well formed opinions and biases. These can be regarded either as impediments to up-dating or more positively as building blocks to new interpretations. Re-education is invariably necessary, along the lines of: what history is about and why it is important; its approaches, sources, techniques and historiography; its relevance to modern society, through the study of social and economic as well as political history.

Another obvious aspect of this familiarity is that history is often seen as a soft option by mature students, for everyone knows something about the past - but often little of real substance for the teacher of history. Some students need to be convinced that history has validity as a social science (or even science) and can deploy the same tool kit of analytical approaches - without losing sight of its importance as an arts subject and a vital context to study of all the humanities.

This starts to tell us something about the kind of history that is taught in non-traditional contexts, motably to students in the OU and Deakin systems. Certainly for OU students, as Marwick says, the emphasis from the very beginning is on methods and principles, with a strong effort to set history in its relationship to other academic disciplines. Neither the OU nor Deakin proposes that the student concentrates solely on methodology to the neglect of the 'facts', but the methodological framework is strong in both instances. The 'facts' and other relevant historical data ought to be more readily assimilated once the theoretical and practical skills are learned. In both institutions the discipline has derived considerable advantages from this practical approach to 'problem-based' history - particularly so in its relationship to other disciplines in the humanities, social sciences and sciences and hence to establishing a significant role in multi and inter-disciplinary studies.

This emphasis on inter-disciplinary approaches is the first major point of comparison I wish to draw. History at the OU developed from the outset in an inter-disciplinary context. The student has to take two Foundation courses - and having an interest in history would probably take both Arts and Social Sciences Foundation courses. History is introduced in the early stages of the Arts Foundation course, Marwick's approach being to confront students from the start with the methods of history, the work of the historian and the practical skills of reading different types of history and writing good, well-structured history essays. This tool kit of approaches is deployed later in the course for thereafter history plays a key role in a major inter-disciplinary study of industrialisation that makes up the final third of the course.

Deakin's Level 1 courses in both Humanities and Social Sciences are more diverse but also essentially inter-disciplinary in approach. Those with a substantial historical component include from Humanities:

Images of Man
The Australian City
Knowledge & Power
Women & Social Change

and from Social Sciences:

War & Modern Industrial Society
Expansion of Europe
Clash of Cultures

Two examples serve to illustrate differing approaches to history at this level. The Australian City is an inter-disciplinary course with the emphasis on history and literature and is designed as a first year introductory course, aimed to interest the student in Australian city growth and provide a background and skills for later Australian Studies courses. The first four weeks of the course cover the stages of urban and industrial growth in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, examining the development of urban complexes in Britain, America and Australia. The main focus of the subsequent major unit is 'Marvellous Melbourne' - a case study in metropolitan growth and culture in the 1880s. Later literary studies - again essentially Australian - are seen in this context. A different and somewhat broader approach is taken by the Social Sciences War & Modern Industrial Society which introduces students to the disciplines of history, economics and political science through a study of Europe since the First World War and ending in 1950 with the early stages of the Cold War. In these and other Level 1 courses at Deakin there is considerable emphasis throughout on the use of sources, textual and documentary analysis, methodology, and historiography - equipping participants for self-study at more advanced levels.

In both universities the commitment to inter-disciplinary approaches to history teaching is maintained at later levels - this for the OU being an early objective articulated by its Planning Committee in 1969. In the OU the earliest inter-disciplinary courses with a strong history component at Second Level were Renaissance & Reformation and The Age of Revolutions, both dealing with historical and cultural developments in their respective periods. These were subsequently replaced by two broadly similar courses - Seventeenth Century England and The Enlightenment. The former has a stronger historical dimension than the latter, though literary and other texts of the Enlightenment are studied in their historical context. Deakin's Australian Studies sequence has the strongest inter-disciplinary commitment at comparable levels; while back at the OU several 'University' (or inter-faculty) courses have been developed with a substantial historical input, notably those on Popular Culture, The Changing Experience of Women and Third World Studies.

Secondly, we look at the respective curricula and model degree progams available to the student of history. Here we will concentrate on the major sequences that have been developed - though in both institutions there are many possible

permutations drawing on relevant course offerings in both humanities and social sciences. At the OU six Full Credits are required for a Pass degree and eight for Honours, so that a student without Advanced Standing and majoring in history would require to complete two Foundation courses and six others (at least three from Third or Fourth Levels) - specialising as much as possible in historical studies. A typical sequence of 1976 is presented in Table 1, showing the options recommended - notably the European history course, War & Society (at Third Level) and the part project-based Great Britain 1750-1950 (at Fourth Level) - supplemented by a range of other courses then available at Third Level including Revolutions of 1848 (Half Credit), Urban History (Half Credit) and Historical Data & the Social Sciences (another course with a substantial project element).

The current position at the OU, seen in the sequence in Table II, is broadly comparable, although students now have the opportunity of pursuing two Full Credits at Third Level, Conflict & Stability in the Development of Modern Europe (which replaced War & Society in 1980) and the recently introduced Britain & America, a comparative course in British and American history since 1760, presented for the first time in 1985. Students are urged to take the Fourth Level Arts & Society in Britain Since the 1920s, which like its predecessor, presents opportunities for a personal research project under tutorial guidance.

At Deakin twenty-four Semester Units are required for a Pass degree and a further eight Units for a degree with Honours. With each course being worth one to four Semester Units (two on average) the Deakin student needs to study a larger number of individual courses to make up the degree - but there is a wider choice from a greater range of options than in the OU, both from Humanities and Social Sciences. Major sequences with strong historical components include: from Humanities, History of Ideas, Australian Studies and Women's Studies; and from Social Sciences, Economic and Social Studies, Historical Studies, and Political Studies. Model degree programs from these sequences are shown in Table III, covering History/Politics, History/Australian Studies, and Social & Economic History majors.

In the Social & Economic History program there is a logical chronological progression from the Second Level Industrial Revolution & Society 1760-1870 to Third Level courses in Economic Change & Social Movements in Europe 1870-1914 and its later companion Economy & Society in Europe 1914-1945. All three make extensive use of readings, off-prints and documentary sources - provided in the Study Guides and accompanying Readers - supported by tuition in the use of historical data, which is a strong element throughout the sequence.

Thirdly, opportunities for specialisation and for personal research applying the techniques learned in earlier study are already well developed at both the OU and Deakin. For example, students undertaking the Fourth Level Arts & Society in Britain Since the 1920s pursue both course work (30 per cent of assessment) and an individual research project for the

remainder. While the general thrust of the taught component is inter-disciplinary, many of the research projects are on specialist topics - some of local but many of national interest. As with the earlier project-based history course (also at Fourth Level), Great Britain 1750-1950: Sources & Historiography, there were fears that students - particularly the more remote - might find difficulty with sources and more specialist reading. To some extent these proved unfounded - given the vast potential at least for local projects - and could be partly solved by the provision of xeroxed materials, off-prints etc on a one-to-one basis. For example several prisoners successfully undertook this course - with source material like census data for a historical demography project being supplied on micro-film and photocopy. The same is true of the successful Deakin near-equivalents on Economic Change & Social Movements and Economy & Society in Europe, where specially created Activity Packages provide the necessary resources for detailed study of the chosen option and the submission of an extended essay on the topic, for example from the 1914-45 period on the Slump, the Spanish Civil War, Stalinism etc.

Common to both programs then, is the carefully graded use of sources and applied methodology at different levels - providing the student with 'hands on' experience in the use of historical sources and data in personal research appropriate to the stage of development and study.

Fourthly, and perhaps most vital to the success of distance teaching in historical studies both at the OU and at Deakin is the inter-active nature of the teaching and the various course components. Central to this is the 'tutorial in print' pioneered by the OU - which involves the teacher in a direct one-to-one relationship with the student. For 'problem-based' history of the kind taught by the institutions this approach is ideal - because it constantly challenges the student in a dialogue with the tutor. All courses make extensive use of carefully graded self-assessment - which again helps maintain the student-tutor relationship if well handled. The basic teaching in written format can be supplemented and extended in different modes - face-to-face, telephone or video links, and correspondence teaching - where these elements can be provided to build on distance teaching in study guides, readers, supplementaries, and audio-visual components. Continuous assessment forms an important part of all courses and here the good tutor-student relationship is vital to the success of distance teaching. Where face-to-face tuition is provided in Weekend and Summer Schools it is generally enthusiastically supported - often by the majority of the student cohort able to attend - perhaps 50-60 per cent. So inevitably a great deal depends on the distance teaching elements.

Lastly, while history as a subject has many obvious attractions for the student - in particular the adult student - it requires especially lively presentation to be successful. The general concentration on new approaches to the teaching of political, social and economic history at both the OU and Deakin, combined with the production of high-quality teaching materials has

contributed to this success despite some of the problems I have identified. Some remarkably interesting and challenging courses - integrating the latest research, the most up-to-date text books, and with lively support materials and tuition - have made modern history and its concerns readily available to a large and widespread audience. Many have been injected with a new-found enthusiasm for a subject they previously regarded as dull and boring - and even carried their interest to Honours Level and beyond. The great level of interest from OU graduates in continuing part-time Higher Degrees is sufficient testimony to this.

While this articulates an essentially personal assessment from the OU viewpoint, it seems to me that the challenge for both institutions now and in the future is to maintain the momentum and originality of approach against a background of financial constraint and the continuing debate about the general utility of the subject - factors common to many other disciplines in both the humanities and social sciences no doubt - but especially critical to history.

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TABLE I

'Model' Curriculum for Student 'Majoring' in History

Level	Recommended	Options	Number of Credits at this level
Foundation	Arts Foundation Course	Social Science Foundation Course or any other	2
Second	Renaissance and Reformation and/or Age of Revolutions	Science and Technology (½) Science and Belief (½) Roman Empire and Rise of Christianity (½) The Sociological Perspective (½) Decision-making in Britain Urban Development	2 or 3
Third	War and Society Revolutions of 1848 (½) Urban History 1550–1750 (½)	Historical Data and the Social Sciences History of Architecture and Design The Nineteenth Century Novel and Its Legacy	2 or 3
Fourth	Great Britain 1750–1950: Sources and Historiography		1 Total of 8 Credits—at least three from third and fourth level—required

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TABLE II

OU Sample History Sequence 1985 Model

Level	Recommended	Options	No of Credits
Foundation	Arts Foundation Course	Social Science Foundation Course	2
Second	17th Century England The Enlightenment	Technology & Change 1750-1914 ($\frac{1}{2}$) Greece 478-336 BC ($\frac{1}{2}$) Rome: The Augustan Age ($\frac{1}{2}$) Popular Culture	2 or 3
Third	Conflict & Stability in Development of Modern Europe Themes in British & American History	Historical Sources	2 or 3
Fourth	Arts & Society in Britain Since the 1920s		1

TABLE III

Model Degree Programs at Deakin

Sample program no. 1, History/Politics majors
Shows a greater concentration of subjects at first and second-year levels and with a major sequence in Historical Studies (8 units), and another in Political Studies (8 units). In this example 4 extra Social Sciences units are taken as well as 4 units of Australian Studies in Humanities.

Year 1 (10 units)

SSS 101	War and Modern Industrial Society
SSS 102	Expansion of Europe
SSS 103	Clash of Cultures
HUW/X 100	Australian City

Year 2 (10 units)

SSS 207	Industrial Revolution and Society 1760–1870
SSS 205	Conflict Management
SSS 211	Political Man
SSS 210	Exchange and Society
HUW/X 211	Regionalism and Australia

Year 3 (4 units)

SSS 304	Crisis Diplomacy
SSS 308	Australia in the World

Sample program no. 4, History/Australian Studies majors
A major in Historical Studies (8 units) and in Australian Studies (8 units) from Humanities. This program reflects a high interest in other courses with a significant component of Historical Studies.

Year 1 (10 units)

SSS 101	War and Modern Industrial Society
SSS 102	Expansion of Europe
SSS 103	Clash of Cultures
HUW/X 100	Australian City

Year 2 (8 units)

SSS 204	Crisis Diplomacy
SSS 207	Industrial Revolution and Society
HUW/X 211	Regionalism in Australia
SSS 205	Conflict Managment

Year 3 (6 units)

SSS 308	Australia in the World
HUW/X 310	Contemporary Australia

Sample program no. 5, Social and Economic/History majors
A course reflecting interest in a major in Social and Economic Studies, a major in History and a sub major in Anthropology. All courses are within the School of Social Sciences.

Year 1 (8 units)

SSS 101	War and Modern Industrial Society
SSS 102	Expansion of Europe
SSS 103	Clash of Cultures

Year 2 (8 units)

SSS 204	Crisis Diplomacy
SSS 207	Industrial Revolution and Society
SSS 206	Symbols and Society
SSS 210	Exchange and Society

Year 3 (8 units)

SSS 309	Economic Change and Social Movement
SSS 313	Economy and Society in Europe
SSS 308	Australia in the World
SSS 312	Power and Society
SSS 305	Conflict Management